

Scottish Tourism Emergency Recovery Group Outdoor Visitor attractions sub group: input from LINK

This response has been coordinated by Scottish Environment LINK on behalf of the following members:

RSPB Scotland
Woodland Trust Scotland
Scottish Raptor Study Group
Trees for Life

Scottish Wildlife Trust
National Trust for Scotland
John Muir Trust

Q&A

1. Is there a common standard for Staying Safe guidance which the tourism sector can use and which will bring confidence to visitors?
 - The eNGO land owning community, who own and operate nature reserves, landscapes and the associated infrastructure are drawing up their own plans for re-opening to cover requirements that ensure sites are safe for staff, visitors, wildlife and the local community. They are sharing guidance and risk assessments for site based staff and contractors. While different eNGOs and different sites are likely to re-open at different times, all decisions will be site specific and taken when appropriate safety measures (above) are in place. A common standard incorporating the needs of the eNGO sector would be very welcome.
 - It is very important to the sector that sufficient notice is given to site managers before Govt advice on accessing the countryside is given so that there is sufficient time for preparations to be made. In some locations, smaller facilities will be difficult to open under social distancing rules so time will be needed to get clear messaging onto site and identify alternatives, if there are any.
 - Some operations are now urgent: INNS control; deer management; peatland restoration; and species monitoring are priorities. Species monitoring includes a wide range of species from invertebrates to plants to mammals. However, raptor monitoring is important in some areas of Scotland for combating wildlife crime. All these activities are vital for conservation, some are time / season specific and others increase in negative impact and in cost the longer they are left. They can be conducted under social distancing measures. Subject to the detail of government guidance we anticipate that many of these important outdoor activities may now be possible under Phase 1 of the Scottish Government's Routemap.
 - The Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group <https://vscg.org/> is currently producing guidance for safe public access management with reference to Covid 19. It is essential that this guidance and any SG guidance are consistent
2. Have there been changes to SG guidance – can people travel to take more exercise?
 - eNGOs will need time to organise staff – many are currently furloughed – so that sites are ready for opening when Govt advice changes (see above). The guidance in Phase 1 of the Routemap that people should stay local for recreation during Phase is particularly welcome as it enables preparation.
3. There is sure to be large amount of pent up demand to visit the countryside and specifically honeypots when restrictions are eased. How will this be managed?

Communications



- We very much support consistent and clear messaging. It must reflect the priority of safety for staff, wildlife, visitors and the local community.

Sites and Facilities

- Fly tipping is an issue on some member sites that we would like to see tackled as soon as possible in order to remove the dangers and inconveniences it poses. We welcome the initiative from SNH to share removal costs where possible.

Staff

- Many eNGOs have furloughed staff so will need time to be able to bring them back to prepare sites and facilities for re-opening. Many organisations rely on volunteers to support site management and conservation delivery. At the moment most organisations have asked volunteers to stand down. Given volunteers have been playing a key role during the current crisis it would be welcome to have additional guidance on volunteers not working in key services.

4. Will we move at different paces in different parts of the country?

- We support consistent messaging but it will need to be tailored possibly within different areas of Scotland. This is why a 'check before you go' message is also very helpful.

5. Will facilities be open if I travel to take exercise

- We support the proposal for visitors to 'check before they go'. All eNGO sites will not be able to re-open immediately and we do not wish to see closed sites impacting on others and increasing issues elsewhere.

Example key messages

Draft Strapline – Check Before You Go

We support this strapline and would like to be able contribute to messaging going forward. eNGOs are keen to use govt messaging as much as possible. We want to use positive messages and welcome visitors back but these must be tempered with messaging on responsible access. There is a clear need to balance positive welcome and caution.

Experience amongst the UK eNGOs from what has happened in England and Wales recently is that people who have rarely visited countryside sites before are now active. We will need clear and simple messages that can be widely understood, on the access code and on safe access during Covid recovery. Safety for visitors, local communities and wildlife should be central to all messaging.

We would also suggest that more detailed site specific or are specific guidance may be particularly valuable (as has already been provided by both National Park) – which encourages responsible behaviour and advises on wildfire risks

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